The Melville Society NEWSLETTER

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All members of the Society can take pride in the success of the conference on **Moby-Dick** sponsored by the Society in cooperation with Williams College and held in Williamstown and Pittsfield on September 2-4. As many as 150 persons attended some of the meetings. Approximately 70 were registered for the full three days.

Since it seems unlikely that a meeting of the Society can be arranged this year in connection with the annual convention of the MLA in Detroit, a business session of the Society was called in Williamstown by President Howard P. Vincent. In the absence of the secretary, who was prevented by his other duties from attending, Jay Leyda served in his capacity.

Willard Thorp was elected president of the Society for the year 1952. Tyrus Hillway was re-elected secretary to serve a three-year term expiring in 1954; and Walter Bezanson was elected a member of the executive committee for a five-year term expiring in 1956. The nominating committee, headed by Charles R. Anderson, presented a proposal to divide the functions of secretary and publication. Accordingly, the group elected William H. Gilman as chairman of the publications committee, to be assisted by Stuart C. Sherman as bibliographer and the president of the Society as **ex officio** member.

Suggestions were made for enlargement of the Newsletter, for extension of membership into colleges of the Pacific Ocean area, for the placing of suitable plaques on the Melville houses in Albany and Lansingburgh, and for a collection of photographs of all places and persons associated with Melville. A resolution was adopted expressing thanks to all who had contributed to the success of the conference and assigning to the president the duty of writing appropriate letters of acknowledgement.

The special gratitude of the Society should go to Luther S. Mansfield, who was in charge of local arrangements; to Howard P. Vincent, our president; to President Baxter of Williams College; to Mrs. Eleanor Melville Metcalf and Miss Agnes Morewood, descendants of Melville; to Gil Wilson, who displayed his illustrations of **Moby-Dick**; to Robert G. Newman, librarian of the Berkshire Athenaeum; to the editors of the **Berkshire Evening Eagle**; to the excellent speakers and panel members; and to many others who had a hand in the affair.

OTHER CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

At least three other conferences have been planned in observance of the centennial of **Moby-Dick.**

The program on "Melville and Nantucket," held in the Unitarian Church, Nantucket Island, on Wednesday afternoon, August 15, included the following items: Invocation by the Reverend William P. Horton; "From the Look-Out," by Edouard A. Stackpole; and "Melville and Nantucket," by Wilson L. Heflin.

While full reports have not yet been received here, it is understood that Oberlin College will observe the centennial on or about October 18. Those interested should write to Elizabeth Foster there.

A Rocky Mountain conference at the Colorado State College in Greeley, originally planned for October 20, will take place on Saturday, November 17. All colleges in the Rocky Mountain area have been invited to send representatives. Hugh Hetherington, Tyrus Hillway, and others will take part in the program. Whale steak will be served.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The centennial edition of **Moby-Dick,** edited by Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent, is scheduled for publication by Hendricks House on or about November 14, the date of the original American edition.

Melville's Early Life and REDBURN, by William Gilman, was published by the New York University Press on August 24. $5.

Who killed Moby Dick? A news release of the Associated Press, written by Don Guy, gives the credit to Amos Smalley of Martha's Vineyard Island. On a whaling voyage begun July 16, 1901, from New Bedford, Smalley harpooned a ferocious white whale 90 feet long, the only recorded catch of its kind in whaling history. Smalley, an Indian, was still alive (aged 74) at Gay Head when the news feature appeared earlier this year. (J. N. Reynolds, of course, recorded the death of an early white whale, "Mocha Dick," over a century ago.)

Personal reminiscences of the Melville family, written by Mrs. Eleanor Melville Metcalf, will be published this winter, according to recent reports.

Thomas Mabbott offers the following: If the schooner **Moby Dick** was built the year **after** Melville's book appeared (see the Newsletter for June, 1951), it should be possible to demonstrate that the name came, not from the whale itself, but from the story; since the whale seems to have been more commonly known as Mocha Dick.

The check-list of Melville items in the New York Public Library, compiled by Herbert Cahoon, is printed in the library's **Bulletin,** issues of June and July, 1951. Information about reprints for members of the society has not yet been received.

The **Report of the Committee on Trends in Research in American Literature, 1940-1950,** published this year by the American Literature Group, shows that Melville during the decade covered has elicited more scholarship than any other American author. The committee counted 159 articles (1,290 pp.), 26 books, 30 theses, 25 research projects, and 3 MLA papers on Melville.

MELVILLE EXPLICATOR

Exp. With regard to the Hotel de Cluny passage in Chapter 41 of **Moby-Dick,** Thomas Mabbott reports that the Hotel de Cluny was erected upon ruins of baths called **les Thermes de Julien.** The name, of course, refers to the Emperor Julian, sometimes known as the Apostate or the Philosopher, who tried to revive paganism during the fourth century. He wore a famous beard.

Exp. For Q-1 (Newsletter, June 1951), Thomas Mabbott suggests: "I feel sure Ishmael sold the embalmed head to a barber FOR (use as) a Block, to show a wig. It wouldn't be too grim; most of the Maori heads in the American Museum of Natural History are not repulsive—especially when you know they are not only enemies but often old friends of the makers. But if block also means a bargain, I'd no more put a pun past Melville than past Shakespeare."

Exp. For Q-2 (Newsletter, June 1951), Thomas Mabbott suggests: "Sea candies and sea macaroni . . . obviously . . . are marine invertebrates which look like candies from translucency and glitter, and worm-like creatures which remind one of spaghetti. The terms may be Melville's own, but my feeling is he heard them."

DETROIT

There will be no annual meeting of the Society this December in connection with the convention of the Modern Language Association. The president of the Society will be unable to attend, and it is felt that only a small number of our members are likely to be there. On the other hand, those who are in Detroit for the MLA meeting may wish to have a place to gather for informal discussions, tea, or cocktails. If a sufficient number desire it and will notify the secretary, he will try to arrange for a place of meeting.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE Melville Society, a group of literary scholars and others interested in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to encourage literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Executive committee: Howard P. Vincent (1951), president; Willard Thorp (1952); Eleanor Melville Metcalf (1953); Merton M. Sealts (1954); William C. Gilman (1955). The annual membership fee of two dollars includes subscription to the Newsletter and other services. Address Tyrus Hillway, secretary, 423 Pequot Avenue, New London, Connecticut. Colorado State College, Greeley, Colorado.